WE CLAIM:

1. A network element for delivering a communications service
   between first and second survivable rings, comprising:
   - a switch for controllably establishing connections between
     the first and second rings; and
   - a controller for controlling the switch and being operable
     to monitor the status of an other network element and
     establish a new inter-ring connection for delivery of the
     service upon failure of the other network element.

2. A computer-readable storage medium containing software that,
   when running on a processor, follows a sequence of steps to
   control a switch in a network element, the switch being
   operable to controllably establish an inter-ring connection
   between first and second rings, the steps comprising:
   - monitoring the status of an other network element; and
   - establishing a new inter-ring connection upon failure of the
     other network element.